



JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES  
21 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0021

CARL J. WILSON  
COMMISSIONER

April 9, 2025

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: L.D. 1343 An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife

Senate Chair Baldacci, House Chair Roberts, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has concerns about the potential impacts of creating a “right to harvest wildlife” for human consumption, nourishment, sustenance, bodily health or well-being, sport, wildlife management, or population control as specified in LD 1343, that pertains to marine species.

As a point of information, the term “harvest” is not otherwise used in marine resources statutes, with the exception of a small number of laws pertaining to the taking of seaweed. The verbs typically used in marine resources statutes that describe the removal of a marine organism from the marine environment are typically “fish for, take, or possess”. We understand that “harvest” is used commonly in Inland Fisheries and Wildlife statutes.

DMR’s concern regarding creating a right to harvest for non-commercial purposes for marine species is that there are currently several species which do not have a personal use or recreational option, although a commercial fishery exists. One example of such a species is sea urchins, which are commercially harvested by a small number of divers and draggers. There is currently no opportunity for members of the public to harvest sea urchins. Similarly, Maine’s substantial and lucrative elver fishery is managed for commercial use by 425 state license holders and ~1000 tribal license holders. Elvers are a quota managed fishery for which the Department issues “swipe cards” in order to track landings in real time and ensure that the quota is not exceeded. For these reasons, there is no personal use or recreational opportunity, and it would not be possible to manage such an opportunity in the same fashion.

DMR would respectfully suggest that any proposed changes to the definitions in the marine resources statutes should be considered by the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources to ensure there are no unforeseen consequences to our commercial fisheries.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if DMR can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

  
Deirdre Gilbert  
Director, State Marine Policy